Motion 1 – Perspectives for the student movement

Submitted by: Socialist Students Steering Committee

1) The current political situation in Britain is extremely volatile. With the Tory Party virtually paralysed by Brexit, the coming weeks could see the collapse of the government and a new early general election, with a potential anti – austerity Corbyn government at the end of the process.

2) However, despite the surge for Corbyn in the 2017 general election, which saw thousands of young people and students turn out at the polls to vote for his manifesto, and the huge turnouts at Corbyn rallies across the country, 2018 did not see a break in the situation nationally with the development of a broad student movement.

3) There are numerous factors which have contributed to the slowness of the development of such a movement. The lack of an organised leadership calling students onto the streets, consciously linked to and fighting for a clear and bold political programme hammered out by the movement itself is the chief factor amongst them.

4) The reason for this is because of the total lack of a clear and confident leadership by the NUS, the major trade unions, and unfortunately at this stage Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell themselves.

5) Despite this however, the current government crisis over Brexit means that this is all subject to rapid change. Having narrowly escaped a Parliamentary vote of no confidence on January 16, Theresa May still faces an increasingly unsustainable position as the Brexit deadline approaches and her party remains split down the middle over what position to take on the question of Brexit.

6) It is possible that within weeks, such are the splits in the Tories, a general election could be called as a result of May losing a vote of no confidence, or by May going to the country in order to break the current deadlock in Parliament. A mass student movement, united with working class struggles and strike actions, could rapidly speed up this process.

7) An early general election could further transform the political terrain here in Britain, potentially bringing to an end nearly nine years of Tory rule and seeing the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Prime Minister. However, the direction of the Labour Party should be to move further left once elected, and Socialist Students, along with other Socialist organisations which see the benefit of left-wing parliamentarians, should be the ones to push it as far as it can go.

8) The potential of an education revolt were already shown to be starting in different areas last year. There were thousands strong marches of students and teachers against college cuts, and earlier in the year the biggest ever strike action in Higher Education led by members of the University and Colleges Union (UCU). UCU are set to yet again potentially strike, with a national ballot over pay due to close on February 22. Socialist Students should yet again prioritise building student solidarity with the strikers.

9) Regardless of the exact course of events in Britain over the coming weeks and months, there exists a wealth of opportunities for all students looking for a way to fight for free education, against austerity, and to kick out the Tories. Socialist Students wants to fight for its programme, based on free education, an end to austerity, and for the socialist transformation of society – to build a mass movement which fights to kick out the Tories, and to propel a Corbyn government with socialist policies to power.

10) The fight against capitalist driven austerity does not end with the driving of the Tories from power. That’s why we fight for the building of a mass movement to end austerity and to struggle for a Corbyn government to implement anti-austerity and socialist policies against the attacks, sabotage and pressure exerted by the capitalist class and their political representatives within the Labour Party, the Blairites. To do this we must back the mandatory deselection campaign taking place, then use this to elect leftists as constituency candidates.